Conditionals

SEMESTRAL UNI - 2023 II

ZERO CONDITIONAL

The *zero conditional* is a structure used for talking about general truths — things which always happen under certain conditions. This page will explain how the zero conditional is formed, and when to use it.

1. The structure of a zero conditional sentence

A zero conditional sentence consists of two clauses, an "if" clause and a main clause (In most zero conditional sentences you can use **when** or **if** and the meaning will stay the same.):

"if" clause	main clause
If you heat water to 100 degrees,	it boils.

If the "if" clause comes first, a comma is usually used. If the "if" clause comes second, there is no need for a comma:

main clause	"if" clause
Water boils	if you heat it to 100 degrees,

We use the same verb form in each part of a zero conditional: the simple present tense:

"if" clause	**if** + subject + simple present verb
main clause	subject + simple present verb

2. Using the zero conditional

The zero conditional is used to talk about things which are always true — such as scientific facts and general truths:

Example	Explanation
If you cross an international date line, the time changes.	This always happens — every time you cross a date line.
If it rains, the grass gets wet.	This is basically always true — the rain makes the grass wet.
Wood doesn't burn if there is no air.	This is a scientific fact — wood needs air in order to burn. No air = no fire.

FIRST CONDITIONAL

The *first conditional* (also called *conditional type 1*) is a structure used for talking about possibilities in the present or in the future. This page will explain how the first conditional is formed, and when to use it.

1. The structure of a first conditional sentence

A first conditional sentence consists of two clauses, an "if" clause and a main clause:

***if* clause**	**main clause**
If you study hard,	you will pass the test.

If the "if" clause comes first, a comma is usually used. If the "if" clause comes second, there is no need for a comma:

main clause	***if* clause**
You will pass the test	if you study hard.

We use different verb forms in each part of a first conditional:

***if* clause**	*if* + subject + simple present verb
main clause	subject + *will* + verb

2. Using the first conditional

The first conditional is used to talk about things which are possible in the present or the future — things which *may happen*:

Example	Explanation
If it's sunny, we'll go to the park.	*Maybe it will be sunny — that's possible.*
Paula will be sad if Juan leaves.	*Maybe Juan will leave — that's possible.*
If you cook the supper, I'll wash the dishes.	*Maybe you will cook the supper — that's possible.*

SECOND CONDITIONAL

The **second conditional** (also called conditional type 2) is a structure used for talking about unreal situations in the present or in the future. This page will explain how the second conditional is formed, and when to use it.

The structure of a second conditional sentence

Like a first conditional, a second conditional sentence consists of two clauses, an “if” clause and a main clause:

“If” clause	**Main clause**
If I had a million dollars,	I would buy a big house.

If the “if” clause comes first, a comma is usually used. If the “if” clause comes second, there is no need for a comma:

Main clause	“If” clause
I would buy a big house	if I had a million dollars.

We use different verb forms in each part of a second conditional:

“If” clause	if + subject + simple past verb*
Main clause	subject + would + verb

*Note that this "simple past" form is slightly different from usual in the case of the verb BE. Whatever the subject, the verb form is "were", not "was": If I were rich, I'd buy a big house.

Using the second conditional

The second conditional is used to talk about things which are unreal (not true or not possible) in the present or the future -- things which don't or won't happen:

Example	Explanation
If I were you, I would drive more carefully in the rain.	I am not you — this is unreal.
Paula would be sad if Jan left.	Jan will not leave — that's not going to happen.
If dogs had wings, they would be able to fly.	Dogs don't have wings — that's impossible.

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